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Summary record of the 5th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 10 October 2005, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Aliyev ..... (Azerbaijan)
later: Mr. Gerts (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Netherlands)

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05-54151 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 26: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (*continued*)

Hearing of petitioners

Question of Western Sahara (A/C.4/60/5/Add.8, 27, 30, 31, 33, 34, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41 and 43)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Najab (Association des Ex-prisonniers de l'Intégrité Territoriale) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

2. **Mr. Najab** (Association des Ex-prisonniers de l'Intégrité Territoriale) said that he, a retired flying officer in the Moroccan Air Force and a former prisoner of war who had spent 25 years in captivity in Tindouf in Algeria, together with a further 2,000 former prisoners of war had formed the Association of which he was President. The suffering that they had experienced had deeply marked them, both physically and mentally and they would be unable to forget until reparation had been made for the harm done to them and until the perpetrators had been held to account. They had been kept for years in holes without roofs, exposed to the heat of summer and the cold of winter, in violation of articles 22, 23 and 25 of the Third Geneva Convention; had performed forced labour seven days a week in violation of articles 49, 51 and 53 of that Convention; had been forced to make false declarations against their country, their army and their institutions, and had been tortured for refusing to do so, in violation of articles 1, 12 and 13 of the same Convention; and had for long periods been prevented from corresponding with their families unless they agreed to start their letters with slogans hostile to their country, in violation of article 72 of the Convention. They had seen their comrades tortured to death, often after having been recaptured by Algerian forces following an attempted escape. Moreover, the officers had not been treated with the respect due to their rank, having often been made to look ridiculous in front of their men and forced to work in violation of articles 13, 44 and 49 of the Convention.

3. The United Nations was the greatest defender of liberty and of respect for international law and human rights. Since the ceasefire in 1991, the Security Council had on four occasions called on Algeria to release all Moroccan prisoners unconditionally. Algeria had, however, turned a deaf ear, holding the prisoners as hostages and forcing them to perform slave labour, which was yet another violation of the Geneva Convention.

4. While all of the Moroccan prisoners registered by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) had now been released, the fate of a large number who had disappeared without trace had still to be determined. The same was true of civilians and of many children snatched from among the civilian population during attacks on various towns in 1979.

5. Because the prisoners had been held on Algerian soil — at Tindouf in the south and near Algiers in the north — Algeria was simultaneously the Detaining Power and the Protecting Power with respect to the Moroccan prisoners of war, as stipulated in articles 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 of the Third Geneva Convention. Consequently, Algeria was responsible for the inhumane treatment and torture that those prisoners had endured for more than 25 years. It was, moreover, incumbent on the Algerian authorities to return the remains of hundreds of Moroccan prisoners of war who had died from torture or disease on Algerian territory, and to answer before the International Criminal Court with respect to such acts of violence committed in violation of the Conventions and of international law. No fewer than 50 articles of the Third Geneva Convention had been violated by the "Algerisario" in its treatment of prisoners of war. He used the word "Algerisario" because it had been Algerian military security officers who had interrogated him at Algerian army headquarters in Tindouf. If Algeria claimed not to be involved, then it should say why it had agreed to hold Moroccan prisoners on its territory, at Tindouf, and why it had taken 460 Moroccan prisoners, including several officers, to army headquarters near Algiers. Algeria could not deny having exchanged 150 Moroccan prisoners of war for 106 of its officers and men captured during the battle of Amgala in 1976; if it had no claims to the Sahara, then it should now tell the international community what its troops were doing in the Sahara, in Mahbes, Bir Lahlou and elsewhere. Algeria must also justify its refusal to free all the 460 prisoners that it held at Blida, and explain why it had sent 273 of them to the Tindouf camps, into the hands of the Frente POLISARIO. As a State party to the First Protocol to the Geneva Convention, Algeria had

committed a grave offence by not releasing all the Moroccan prisoners of war, military and civilian. During their detention in the north, the 460 prisoners had been without news of their families, because the Algerian authorities had refused to allow the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit them, in violation of the Geneva Convention. Finally, Algeria should explain why it had not reacted to the assertion made by Mr. Ould Khadad, the Frente POLISARIO coordinator with the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), on the Al-Jazeera television station, that the Moroccan prisoners were in liberated areas, and not on Algerian soil. Could it be said that Tindouf and Blida, south of Algiers, were in territory liberated by the Frente POLISARIO?

6. Representatives of several non-governmental organizations who had addressed the Committee in support of the Frente POLISARIO had visited the camps and interviewed the prisoners, but not one of them had thought to call for their release, even when they knew the extent of their suffering.

7. *Mr. Najab withdrew.*

8. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Ruddy (United States Ambassador (retired)) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

9. **Mr. Frank Ruddy** (United States Ambassador (retired)) said that, over the past 30 years, various specious arguments had been put forward to make Morocco's land grab acceptable to the international community. The invasion of Western Sahara had been called the "Green March", as if calling an invasion by the name of a colour respected in Islam somehow justified it. Morocco, which had railed against Spain's colonization of Western Sahara, now replaced Spain as the new colonizer. It had sought an opinion from the International Court of Justice and the Court had denied its right to sovereignty over the area. Morocco had then invaded the Territory, asserting that the International Court of Justice somehow supported its position. That was patently not the case. Furthermore, the Security Council had twice condemned the invasion, but Morocco continued defiantly to colonize and terrorize Western Sahara.

10. After the ceasefire in 1991, the United Nations had set up a peacekeeping mission, MINURSO, to supervise a referendum intended to allow the people of Western Sahara to decide whether to be free or to be part of Morocco. He himself had begun the work on the referendum in earnest, but Morocco had sabotaged it, with the help of an ineffective representative of the Secretary-General. The Moroccans had effectively taken control of MINURSO, screening and eliminating voters and terrorizing the local population. Once they had seen the desire of the Saharans to reject unity with Morocco, however, the Moroccans had seen to it that there would never be a referendum. Now there was a plan under which Morocco would rule Western Sahara for a certain period of time, and there would then be a referendum. While discussions continued on the legal niceties as to whether members of one tribe or another should be allowed to vote, Morocco was sending thousands of subsidized Moroccan citizens into Western Sahara to strengthen its hold there.

11. The common law doctrine of *res ipsa loquitur* held that where the accused's fault was obvious merely by a recitation of the facts, no proof was necessary. A recitation of Morocco's crimes, its invasion of Western Sahara, its occupation and colonization over 30 years, and its cynical destruction of a referendum set up by the United Nations to settle the question, spoke for themselves and testified to Morocco's guilt. Morocco had acted lawlessly, and the question was whether the United Nations was willing or able to restrain its lawlessness. Shamefully, the answer so far had been an unequivocal "No".

12. *Mr Ruddy withdrew.*

13. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Rachid (Conseil Consultatif pour Le Sahara) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

14. **Mr. Rachid** (Conseil Consultatif pour Le Sahara) said that the file on decolonization in Western Sahara ought to have been closed when the Spanish army had withdrawn in 1975. The rulers of Algeria had, however, insisted on using the Frente POLISARIO to pursue their own hegemony in the region on the pretext of defending the right to self-determination. It was in fact Morocco that had been lobbying for self-determination in Western Sahara since before the Frente POLISARIO had even existed, while Algeria had been trying ever since 1975 to use military force, diplomacy, propaganda, and exploitation of the suffering of refugees to stir up tensions that had never existed. The Saharan people had been united in their desire to maintain their traditional allegiance to the Moroccan throne and had done all they could to

facilitate the work of MINURSO, while Algeria and the Frente POLISARIO had tried to prevent the Identification Commission established by Security Council resolution 725 (1991) from registering thousands of tribesmen to participate in the referendum. Morocco had, in the course of several international meetings, demonstrated its responsiveness to Security Council resolution 1309 (2000) and expressed its desire for a permanent solution that would provide for Morocco's sovereignty and territorial integrity within a decentralized framework that would conform to the wishes of the inhabitants of Western Sahara. Algeria's proposed partition of Western Sahara between Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO — which demonstrated Algeria's disregard for the residents of Western Sahara and the principle of self-determination — was not even worth discussing, and the new proposal of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General had returned the conflict to square one.

15. The majority of Western Saharans in the Saguia el-Hamra, the Rio de Oro, and other parts of the Kingdom of Morocco, not to mention the thousands of people of Saharan origin whose files Algeria and the Frente POLISARIO would not permit the Identification Commission to open, believed that the fairest solution would be self-government, as proposed by His Majesty Mohammed VI in his latest Coronation Day speech, within the framework of the national and territorial sovereignty and unity of the Kingdom of Morocco.

16. *Mr. Rachid withdrew.*

17. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Ait Baala (Euro-Mediterranean Women's Committee) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

18. **Ms. Ait Baala** (Euro-Mediterranean Women's Committee) said that she wished to draw attention to the 30 years of silence from the international community on the tragic situation of a people subjected to inhuman and degrading conditions, namely the Moroccan people detained in the Tindouf camps, on Algerian territory, who had become hostages in a never-ending conflict between Morocco and Algeria despite the ceasefire of September 1991.

19. Whatever view one took of the conflict, nothing could justify the situation in the camps. She wondered how the international community could look on as tens of thousands of women and children, the elderly and the young continued to live in tents in utter poverty, in the heart of one of the most inhospitable regions of the planet. They were living in an intolerable situation, surrounded by Algerian military security personnel, with their movements, even inside the camps, subject to military regulations, in flagrant contradiction of the conditions established for the mission of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which was not mandated to act within militarized zones. Bereft of international protection, those people were subject to the whim of an armed militia, under the direction of the Algerian regular army, which had committed criminal atrocities. An accusation of crimes against humanity and war crimes had been referred to the International Criminal Court, it had been found to be admissible and would lead to the prosecution of those in Algeria who were responsible.

20. It was a proven fact that no one knew the actual number of people living in the Tindouf camps. The Algerian authorities had never allowed UNHCR to survey the population in order to assess its needs. The people in the camps, whom Algeria described to the international community as refugees, did not meet the criteria set out in article 1 of the United Nations Convention on Refugees of 28 July 1951. In fact, the Saharan people living in the Tindouf camps had never been persecuted in their original homeland. The great majority of the Saharans who had remained there, or the former members of the Frente POLISARIO who had been able to return to their homeland after fleeing the Tindouf camps at the risk of their lives, were proof that there was no discrimination. Some former members of the Frente POLISARIO who had fled the Tindouf camps were currently present in the United Nations. She urged members of the Committee to meet them; they would learn that the image of refugees presented by Algeria was a fabrication which made it possible for Algeria to sequester populations and shamelessly to divert international humanitarian aid for propaganda purposes. The international press was full of stories about the diversion of international humanitarian aid, in particular that provided by Cuba via the World Food Programme concerning the sale for cash of Saharan children deported to Cuba and the illicit smuggling of weapons and cigarettes. Nothing, however, had any impact on Algeria.

21. She drew attention to a report by the *Fondation France Libertés* which gave ample evidence of the torture perpetrated in the camps and made it clear that

the Frente POLISARIO had committed flagrant violations of human rights, with regard to both civilian and military prisoners. It was all the more disquieting to observe that such crimes had been perpetrated by a signatory to the Geneva Conventions, namely Algeria, which was sheltering, funding, arming and manipulating that band of criminals, while providing them with total protection. Given that situation, she asked what credibility could be granted to a State which claimed to defend such sacred principles, when its hands were stained with so many crimes. She wondered what credit could be accorded to a country that authorized a band of assassins to perpetrate such terrible crimes on its own territory and with the complicity of its own security services and what trust could be placed in a country that allowed a part of its territory to be beyond all judicial control, the only law applied being that of terror.

22. The ideological packaging and the slogans trotted out repeatedly by the Algerian propaganda machine unfortunately did not in any way change the bitter reality prevailing in the Tindouf camps. Elsewhere in the world the major Powers had intervened and humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) had carried out protest campaigns in less dire situations, but no one was allowed into the Tindouf camps without the approval of the Algerian security forces, an approval that was granted only to certain NGOs which agreed to see in the camps nothing but an exotic scene of children playing barefooted on the sand dunes. Those obsessed with the archaic past were so spellbound by their pseudo-revolutionary fantasy that they were unwilling to look reality in the face, despite the proofs and the markings on maps supplied to them by those who had escaped from the camps. They had even closed their eyes to the torture centres and mass graves at Tindouf, and to the fact that the projects that they had financed had been implemented by Moroccan prisoners of war in flagrant violation of international conventions. That was indeed a shameful complicity.

23. Algeria, which for 30 years had been harassing Morocco, should think back to the unconditional support provided by the Moroccan authorities to Algeria in its struggle for independence and territorial integrity against the French plan for a referendum on self-determination for the Tuareg of the Algerian Sahara. Ironically, some 10 years after independence, Algeria had taken that same plan and set out to apply it in the territory of its Moroccan neighbour, claiming that it was merely defending the right of the Saharan people to self-determination. Algeria seemed to forget that Morocco also had the right to defend its territorial integrity in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). It was clear that, using self-determination as a screen, Algeria was using the Frente POLISARIO to divide the Moroccan nation with the sole aim of satisfying its own geostrategic interest in the Sahara, and was mortgaging the future of all the people of the Maghreb.

24. The stability and security of the wider Saharan region were endangered and there was a threat to the whole balance of the region. Major damage had already been done in the southern part of Algeria, and in Mauritania, Chad and elsewhere. According to the most qualified experts, the region of the Sahara was in danger of becoming a hotbed of international terrorism and a serious threat, not only to the countries of the Maghreb but also to Europe and to the stability of the whole world. Violations of human rights, the diversion of humanitarian aide and plans for hegemony over the Sahara as a whole — that was the reality being orchestrated by Algeria. She appealed for measures to make Algeria respect international law in conformity with its international commitments, for its responsibility in the Saharan conflict to be recognized and for the role of the Algerian army in the Tindouf camps to be unequivocally condemned.

25. *Ms. Ait Baala withdrew.*

26. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Ebbi (COREFASA) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

27. **Ms. Ebbi** (COREFASA) said that she wished to express the profound concern of many of her compatriots regarding the heartbreaking conditions under which hundreds of thousands of people were living in the Tindouf camps. It was 30 years since one of the most pointless conflicts of modern times had been unleashed and its devastating effects, in particular, instability and deep despair were well known. It was time to assess the situation; unfortunately, the balance was tragic in terms of human and material losses.

28. The tens of thousands of Saharans in the Tindouf camps living in inhumane conditions were subject to the authority of a group that had abrogated to itself the title of "sole legitimate representative of the Saharan people". Any disagreement with that totalitarian group was brutally silenced, in a clear violation of human

rights that should not leave the international community unmoved and that should not remain unpunished. More than 8,000 Saharan people had left the Tindouf camps, fleeing from the mental and physical repression and persecution of the leader of the Frente POLISARIO, Mohamed Abdelaziz, and his repressive apparatus that received its instructions from Algeria's military security.

29. She called attention to the diversion of humanitarian aid, which, instead of reaching its destination, was pillaged for the illicit profit of the leadership of the separatist movement. As an eyewitness to the facts, who had lived for 16 years under the extreme conditions prevailing in the Tindouf refugee camps, she denounced the way in which women and children were treated, the former being compelled to perform forced labour and the latter being indoctrinated from a very early age. The slogans with which the children were indoctrinated — "Martyrdom for the whole country", "We shall seize freedom with a gun" — represented a flagrant violation of the rights of the child, as provided for in the Charter of the United Nations.

30. The conflict in Western Sahara was an essential element in the destabilization of the region. The discord between the parties would rapidly endanger the fragile cessation of hostilities, which had been achieved after much struggle. If the truce was broken, the consequences would be unpredictable and would have an adverse effect on the entire North African region.

31. She thanked the Secretary-General for his untiring efforts to resolve the conflict, and appealed to the entire international community to support the current efforts to reach a peaceful, fair and lasting solution under the auspices of the United Nations, and to put an end to the pain and suffering of thousands of families trapped in Algerian territory and return them to their homeland, Morocco.

32. *Ms. Gajmoula Ebbi withdrew.*

33. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Sidati (Institut des Etudes Africaines) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

34. **Mr. Sidati** (Institut des Etudes Africaines) said that he had learned from personal experience that the Frente POLISARIO did not exist as an independent organization but rather was an instrument created, financed, coordinated and directed by Algeria. In its diplomatic offices and embassies throughout the world, no action was ever taken without consultation with an Algerian ambassador or with an official of Algerian military security.

35. As a former ambassador of the Frente POLISARIO to Italy, he had organized, in conjunction with a number of Italian NGOs, a caravan of humanitarian assistance for the camps in Western Sahara. The ambassador of Algeria to Italy, however, had telephoned to instruct him to cease all assistance activities and instead to participate in a demonstration denouncing the Embassy of Morocco in Rome. He had found himself in an embarrassing position with respect to the Italian non-governmental organizations and the Saharan refugees in need of food and medicines, and had personally expressed his dissatisfaction to the Algerian authorities. Their only concern, however, had been that he should convince the Italian non-governmental organizations to demonstrate with the Algerians. Those orders had been issued by the Algerian security commander Mahfoud, who controlled everything in the Embassy in much the same way that his counterparts controlled the camps.

36. As a man who valued freedom, he could not continue to be part of an organization that was run by Algeria and allowed no freedom of decision-making. To continue as a member of the Frente POLISARIO would be to defy the very principle of self-determination that was supposedly its raison d'être. He had taken the decision independently, free from moral, economic or political pressure, to return to his country of origin, Morocco, and join the thousands of native Moroccan Saharans who had opted to remain in the Saharan provinces of Morocco.

37. Those Saharans whom Algeria had forced to live in the Tindouf refugee camps longed to be reunited with their families. Only a fraction of the military assistance provided to them actually reached its destination; most of the supplies were being sold in the markets of neighbouring countries, where smuggling and trafficking in arms and drugs were taking place, giving rise to an increase in illegal clandestine immigration to Europe. The many Algerians who also lived in the camps, including the leaders of the Frente POLISARIO, were indifferent to the situation of the Saharan refugees and cared even less about reaching a peaceful settlement to their problem, which could only

be achieved through integration in their native country, Morocco.

38. *Mr. Sidati withdrew.*

39. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Fecci (Paris Tempo Productions) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

40. **Ms. Fecci** (Paris Tempo Productions) said that her work in recent years on the documentary film entitled "Western Sahara, Africa's Lost Colony", had brought her into close contact with Saharan refugee families struggling to maintain their dignity in difficult conditions. They were, for the most part, non-political and highly educated people — doctors, nurses, engineers and teachers — and women played an impressive role in the civil society they had created for themselves in the camps.

41. Everything in their lives had become permanently temporary, in a pattern of raised expectations and disillusionment. So many times, they had put their lives and their plans on hold — after the initiation of the identification process for a referendum that had never happened and during the negotiations conducted by Mr. Baker. Even the family visit programme organized by UNHCR had been sorely disappointing.

42. At the root of the problem was Morocco's refusal to accept the negotiated settlement plan and allow the referendum on self-determination to be held. Its intransigence had become a de facto annexation of the Territory without an act of self-determination. Despite the best efforts of MINURSO, it seemed that the Moroccan Government wished nothing more than a continuation of the status quo, in the hope that eventually the refugees would grow tired and find ways either to emigrate to third countries or accept Moroccan authority.

43. The people of Western Sahara were strong in their determination to exercise their rights and many believed that the United Nations had failed to keep its promises. The international community's failure to resolve the current impasse could lead to even greater disaster. The Saharans were a peaceful people and did not wish to return to war, but growing frustration and lack of progress might well convince the younger generation that armed struggle was the only solution.

44. *Ms. Fecci withdrew.*

45. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Abdelkader (Personnalité Sahraouie, ex-ministre du POLISARIO) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

46. **Mr. Abdelkader** (Personnalité Sahraouie, ex-ministre du POLISARIO) said the Frente POLISARIO should not be considered a genuine political movement seeking a solution to the problem of Western Sahara, because it was in every respect under the control of Algeria. Algeria had even proposed the alternative of partition, which demonstrated that it did not truly care about upholding the right to self-determination, but was concerned with its own hegemony in the region. Algeria had defied all human rights laws by using the sufferings of Moroccan families as a bargaining chip until American and international pressure forced their release. It had prevented human rights organizations, including UNHCR from bringing aid to refugees. Algeria had isolated every official of the Frente POLISARIO who had attempted to act independently and had tried to obscure the historical record of its 1988 takeover and purge of the Frente POLISARIO. It was strange that UNHCR had not devoted more attention to helping refugees to escape the hell of the Tindouf camps. Everyone knew that residents of southern Morocco lived in peace, freedom and security in their homeland, and that a vast majority of Saharans desired now more than ever to remain under Moroccan sovereignty. Algeria's Machiavellian behaviour notwithstanding, that was the only solution that would allow security and stability to triumph over tribal and factional conflict.

47. As a former Minister both of Justice and of the Interior for the Frente POLISARIO, he affirmed that the Tindouf camps were prisons run by immoral gangs which trafficked in arms, drugs and human beings, and that some of the leaders of the Frente POLISARIO who claimed political legitimacy were afraid of a political solution because they feared being called to account for murdering innocent people and stealing humanitarian aid. He appealed to the international community to exert pressure on Algeria to accept the desire of the Saharans to live under Moroccan sovereignty. That would help the greater Arab Maghreb to confront tribal struggle, regional conflict, instability and extremist terrorist movements.

48. *Mr. Abdelkader withdrew.*

49. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Hansen (Norwegian Support Committee for Western Sahara) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

50. **Mr. Hansen** (Norwegian Support Committee for Western Sahara) said that, in July 2005, human rights observers from the Norwegian Support Committee had been detained, threatened, and expelled by a force of some 250 Moroccan police officers, many of them armed. The human rights observers had been sent to El Aaiún to attend the trial of 16 Saharans arrested for protesting against Moroccan oppression. Only hours after their arrival, one of their contacts, Mr. Latif Allal, had been arrested and tortured by the Moroccan police. Another contact, Mr. Brahim Noumira, had been severely tortured in Moroccan jails, although he had not been convicted of any crime. Many others had met similar fates.

51. A statement from some of the courageous and respected representatives of the people of Western Sahara — Aminatou Haidar, Ali Salem Tamek, Lidri Elhoucine and 33 others — being held in the infamous Black Prison in El Aaiún was being circulated to Committee members. They had been arrested by Moroccan security forces for their participation in a series of largely peaceful demonstrations in May, June and July 2005, and most of them had been subjected to prolonged interrogation, beatings, torture, or other degrading treatment, threats of rape or murder, forced feeding or injections while on hunger strike, isolation and deportation to Moroccan jails. In their message, the Saharan political prisoners claimed that the judicial police proceedings and accusations against them were completely unfounded, and that they had been convicted in mock trials orchestrated for overtly political motives. Moroccan political parties and the mass media were carrying out ferocious smear campaigns against them, and Moroccan medical staff in the hospitals and clinics in Western Sahara often refused to treat Saharan victims of police brutality, or to issue medical certificates to prove that they had been subjected to torture. The Moroccan authorities continued to violate human rights in Western Sahara despite appeals by international human rights organizations such as Amnesty International and the World Organisation against Torture.

52. The Saharan political prisoners therefore appealed to the United Nations to guarantee the Saharan people their right to self-determination, to protect them from the repressive Moroccan apparatus, to protect Saharan human rights activists, to bring about the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners being held in jails and to urge the Moroccan authorities to allow international observers and the mass media to enter Western Sahara.

53. The fate of the political prisoners was crucial to the work of the United Nations in Western Sahara. Those prisoners were promoting the implementation of United Nations resolutions through peaceful means; they enjoyed the strong support, sympathy and confidence of the Saharan people; they were laying the foundations for future peaceful coexistence between a decolonized Western Sahara and Morocco; and their incarceration prevented them from exerting a calming, moderating influence on young protesters.

54. Continued Moroccan occupation of Western Sahara not only threatened the peace and stability of the entire Maghreb region but also undermined the credibility of the United Nations. While the international community was procrastinating, the people of Western Sahara were paying with their freedom and their lives. He therefore called for an immediate halt to the repression of the Saharans, and for an end to the physical blockade of Western Sahara and, ultimately, its occupation.

55. *Mr. Hansen withdrew.*

56. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Oksalampi (YAAKAARE-REDHRIC) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

57. **Ms. Oksalampi** (YAAKAARE-REDHRIC) welcomed the release, on 18 August 2005, of the 404 long-term prisoners, 14 years after the ceasefire concluded in 1991 under the auspices of the United Nations. YAAKAARE-REDHRIC, an organization that fought impunity, called for an international investigation into the fate of all Moroccan prisoners of war who had disappeared in the Tindouf camps, and for the prosecution of those responsible for human rights violations in the camps, namely the Frente POLISARIO and Algeria. Prisoners of war and the families of prisoners who had died in the Tindouf camps must be compensated; and the remains of those who had died in Algeria must be recovered and returned to their families. She expressed grave concern about the fate of approximately 200 Moroccan military personnel and civilians who were still being held in the Tindouf camps, according to lists drawn up by the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva.

58. She feared that the Frente POLISARIO was forcing members of minor tribes and black Africans into the hard labour until recently carried out by the Moroccan political prisoners who had been released. Having worked for 15 years for a Swiss organization which supported the Frente POLISARIO, she knew that the movement did not address the issues of tribalism, slavery or racism, and that those issues were totally taboo in the refugee camps. Some Saharan families had actually brought slaves with them — all black Africans — to the Tindouf camps. Recently, YAAKAARE-REDHRIC had learned from a reliable source that, at the outbreak of the armed conflict in 1975, approximately 150-200 black African slaves from the former Spanish Sahara had fled to Tindouf in search of a better life, but had been imprisoned and tortured by the military security army of the Frente POLISARIO.

59. Conscientious objectors were another target of discrimination. Approximately 30 persons from minority tribes who had been conscripted but had refused to return to the front in 1982, had been imprisoned and tortured. Their fate was still unknown.

60. She warned human rights and humanitarian organizations which provided assistance to refugees that they might one day be viewed as accomplices in the torture inflicted by the Frente POLISARIO and Algeria, a country which was a signatory of the Geneva Conventions. For example, France Libertés, a French non-governmental organization had for years provided substantial humanitarian assistance to Saharan refugees before learning that the Frente POLISARIO was abusing Moroccan prisoners of war. Moreover, the pensions of Saharan soldiers who had retired from the Spanish army were being diverted by the Saharan authorities in the camps.

61. According to various accounts and first-hand observations by YAAKAARE-REDHRIC, black African civilians in the Tindouf camps lived under extremely difficult conditions, with little access to education, medical care or leadership positions. She called for an investigation into the fate of Mauritanian black African prisoners who had been captured by the Frente POLISARIO in the armed conflict of 1975 to 1979, including Mr. Baïdy Diop, brother of eminent linguist Mr. Mamadou Samba Diop. The fate of hundreds of Saharan civilians who had disappeared in the camps since the outbreak of the conflict must also be determined.

62. In conclusion, she said that the human rights violations could only be put to an end through direct negotiations between Morocco and Algeria.

63. *Ms. Oksalampi withdrew.*

64. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Boukhari (Frente POLISARIO) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

65. **Mr. Boukhari** (Frente POLISARIO) said that, 30 years after its illegal invasion and occupation of Western Sahara, Morocco had still not honoured the commitment it had undertaken in accepting the 1991 settlement plan. It had reneged on its promise to hold a referendum on self-determination, offered by Mr. Karim Laamrani, the Prime Minister of Morocco at the time, and had rejected the peace plan for self-determination of the people of Western Sahara (the Baker plan), proposed by the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy, Mr. James Baker, in January 2003.

66. It was unfortunate that the European Union had expressed an intention of signing an illegal fisheries agreement with Morocco. That agreement involved Saharan waters and was understood by the people of Western Sahara as encouraging Morocco's obstruction of United Nations efforts to secure their self-determination. He hoped that the European Union would reconsider its decision and urge Morocco to respect international law and human rights in conformity with the provisions of the Association Agreement it had signed.

67. The Frente POLISARIO had done everything in its power to bring about the decolonization of Western Sahara. It had respected the ceasefire, accepted the settlement plan, the Houston Accords and the Baker plan, and had responded favourably to appeals by the Security Council and the General Assembly to release all Moroccan prisoners of war, even though they were members of an invading army that had sown terror in Western Sahara. Far from reciprocating the good faith shown by the Frente POLISARIO, the Moroccan authorities had not altered their position on Saharan prisoners of war and the hundreds of civilians who had disappeared. They had even stepped up human rights violations in the occupied territories, particularly towards the prisoners of conscience who were on a hunger strike.

68. Morocco's absurd proposals for autonomy and administrative decentralization, which were designed

to cover up its intransigence, were not an alternative to self-determination. The path to peace was clearly outlined in the settlement plan and the Baker plan. To ignore them, or to disregard the right of the Saharan people to self-determination would create a dangerous vacuum and give rise to a situation that could degenerate into war and chaos. The forthcoming visit to the region by the new Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. van Walsum, would be an occasion for the international community to determine whether Morocco was prepared to reverse its long-standing attitude of non-cooperation and obstruction of peace.

69. *Mr. Boukhari withdrew.*

70. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Bouh (Former member of the political bureau of the Frente POLISARIO) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

71. **Mr. Bouh** (Former member of the political bureau of the Frente POLISARIO) said that he had been a member of the political bureau of the Frente POLISARIO, director general of the political commissariat of its army, director general of its radio, governor of the Aousserd and Dakhla wilayas in the Tindouf camps, and finally director of protocol of the Office of the President.

72. The Committee had been led to believe that there was an issue of decolonization involved. In reality, the battle joined was for Algeria's hegemony in the region. In laying claim to its own portion of the Sahara, Morocco had acted within its rights under international law. Algeria had always claimed to be in favour of any solution that would enable Morocco to reclaim its Territories from Spain, the colonial Power. In reality, from 1975 onwards Algeria had plotted against Morocco and provided military, financial and diplomatic support to the Frente POLISARIO, and it had been a military presence in the Sahara since the withdrawal of Spanish forces. Algeria had inspired the idea of creating a Saharawi republic on Frente POLISARIO territory in the Tindouf area, and in 1976 had appointed its own man, Mr. Mohamed Abdelaziz, to the post of Secretary-General of the Frente POLISARIO. Algerian military security had been involved in the aftermath of the four major purges within the organization in the seventies and eighties, and in putting down the camp revolt of 1988. All action taken by the Frente POLISARIO had in reality been initiated, and sometimes even imposed on the movement, by Algeria. Indeed, Algeria had suggested to Mr. James Baker that the solution to the problem of the Sahara lay in partitioning the Territory.

73. Algeria was fully responsible vis-à-vis the international community for everything that was occurring on its territory, and therefore for the fate of the 40,000 people living in absolute poverty in the Tindouf camps, for the deaths and disappearances, and for the sufferings of women and children there. The application made UNHCR to conduct a census in order to improve the supervision of food distribution had been refused.

74. The principle of self-determination was in danger of being abused by Algeria. Those who had drafted the provisions of United Nations resolution 1514 (XV) had shown wisdom and foresight when they had limited that principle in order to prevent its exploitation for the purpose of destroying countries and dispersing peoples. Contrary to propaganda, most people in the Sahara had never been to the Tindouf camps, but were working and living peacefully in the southern part of Morocco, and over 40 Saharawis were currently serving as elected representatives in the national Parliament.

75. The international community had recently supported the idea of a negotiated solution which would be mutually acceptable to the parties concerned. Morocco had confirmed its willingness to grant the Sahara extensive autonomy within the framework of national sovereignty; that constituted real progress towards a solution and the formula had been accepted by the majority of Saharawis. Many in the leadership of the Frente POLISARIO were aware that their separatist ideas were unattainable and could lead to civil war, and he urgently appealed to his former friends and brothers in the movement to join in healing the wounds of the past and in building a better future. An autonomous Sahara would constitute the best guarantee of stability in the region and of safety in the Mediterranean. He urged an end to the conflict in order that the weapons made available by Algeria to the Frente POLISARIO should not further promote terrorism in the region.

76. He warned the non-governmental organizations which supported the Frente POLISARIO of their liability for the crimes committed against the people in the camps, and invited the supporters of the Frente POLISARIO and Algeria to see through the slick

packaging to the suffering and human rights abuses it concealed.

77. *Mr. Bouh withdrew.*

Question of New Caledonia (A/C.4/60/4)

78. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Wamytan (Front de libération national kanak socialiste (FLNKS)) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

79. **Mr. Wamytan** (Front de libération national kanak socialiste (FLNKS)), speaking also as a representative of a committee for the management of natural resources and two Kanak organizations for the defence of Kanak interests against the international mining companies, said that independence was his country's non-negotiable aim and it had signed the Nouméa Accord with a view to ending colonial rule, in line with the stated policy of the United Nations. The Accord was therefore an international agreement within the meaning of international law, intended to involve the Kanaks, in particular in the transition mechanism to prepare for the future State and to promote political and economic emancipation and the emergence of a common awareness within the context of Caledonian citizenship. Five years later, France continued to pursue and fund the policy of European settlement despite the promises made in 1988 by senior politicians, including the Prime Minister, Mr. Michel Rocard. Major metallurgical projects and tax breaks had stimulated immigration, mainly to the South Province. That was a well-known scenario which ultimately implied the possibility of partition of New Caledonia. Kanak society was being fragmented and its people, particularly some of its young people, were increasingly marginalized and excluded from a society developing towards the French model. Kanak children had not thrived in the French schooling and university systems and the success rate in obtaining professional qualifications was very low. Despite the provisions of the Nouméa Accord, there was as yet no law to protect the local workforce; the number of Kanaks who were successful in the civil service examinations had declined drastically, while the implementation in the private sector of provisions for training Kanak managers was far from adequate, further stimulating immigration.

80. The sum of $US 1.1 million allocated in 2005 to the Rural and Land Development Agency for land purchases to meet the needs in the peri-urban areas was totally inadequate, and the Kanak leaders were facing French justice for defending their land. There was no environmental legislation, mining regulations dated back to the 1950s, the country had been plundered for 125 years, over 2 million tons of nickel had been mined and no compensation had been paid to the local communities.

81. A pivotal point of the Nouméa Accord had been the provision that persons who had arrived after 1998 would be excluded from voting in provincial elections. That provision had not been implemented, despite promises made by Mr. Jacques Chirac in 2003. Moreover, the discussions on electoral reform had been postponed until early in 2006, and the timetable might be further affected by the forthcoming French presidential election in 2007.

82. The right to self-determination and the viability of the emerging Kanak State were threatened by increased plundering of the country's natural resources. The trend was towards more control of the economy. The only sector in which Kanaks were active was in mining, essentially as a result of political action and the proximity of nickel deposits to areas under traditional influence. The provisions in the Nouméa Accord calling for a mining plan, environmental regulations and a transparent mining policy to be in place by 1 January 2004 had not been implemented. If the stated goals of the three major metallurgical projects were achieved, New Caledonia would produce 1.5 million tons of nickel ore in the period 2009 to 2019. The South Province and France had placed major waivers on norms concerning the discharge of heavy metals into the sea and of waste into the atmosphere, enabling the International Nickel Corporation (Inco) to implement its plan to use sulphuric acid-based chemical processing. The country's resources would be substantially depleted and the environment polluted before self-determination was achieved between 2014 and 2019, and industrial pollution would substantially increase in the South Pacific region. He did not know whether neighbouring countries which would be affected had been officially informed of the danger, contrary to the international conventions in place.

83. He appealed to the United Nations to monitor the emancipation process that had been undertaken in New Caledonia. France must be called to account with regard to the performance of its role in the decolonization process. The United Nations was responsible for the future of the Kanak people and

should not allow them to sink into oblivion. Following an initiative by some members of the FLNKS leadership, he proposed that the United Nations should hold the next seminar on decolonization in Nouméa in 2006, and that a special United Nations mission should be sent to New Caledonia in accordance with the precedent set in 1999.

84. *Mr. Wamytan withdrew.*

Question of the United States Virgin Islands

85. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Dr. Corbin (United States Virgin Islands) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

86. **Dr. Corbin** (United States Virgin Islands) said that his Government had been engaged for the past 30 years in the question of the participation of Non-Self-Governing Territories in the work of the United Nations and its specialized agencies. Its participation in regional seminars on decolonization since 1990 had provided it with an important forum for interaction with representatives of other Territories as they proceeded towards democratic governance. His Government had sought to widen the participation of the Territory in the wider United Nations system of organizations, and in 1984 had become an associate member of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). It had also served as chairman of the United Nations Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC) in 1988 to 1989 and was currently serving in that capacity. An important aspect of the work of a regional commission was to facilitate the participation of its associate members as observers in United Nations world conferences and selected special sessions of the General Assembly. Participation provided access to information on some major economic and social issues involved in the sustainable development of small island countries. He commended those specialized agencies and United Nations bodies, particularly the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the respective regional commissions which had provided access for the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

87. He had been puzzled when some months earlier the Economic and Social Council had withheld support for the principle of the participation of the Territories in its activities, both because that constituted a reversal and because the Council had shown great flexibility in granting consultative status to hundreds of non-governmental organizations over the years. The resolution currently before the Fourth Committee welcomed the ECLAC initiative to facilitate participation of the Territories in United Nations world conferences and sought to explore future modalities for their participation in the work of the Council. The States members of the Council would ultimately decide whether to implement those modalities, and the initiative should not cause them any concern. Provision for participation was, however, precious to the Territories as, in view of their non-self-governing status, it was inaccessible to them without the concurrence of the administering Power, and it would remain inaccessible until the completion of the decolonization process. Participation by the Territories would further build their capacity, enhance their development process, and contribute significantly to addressing their colonial condition. It was by such tangible support that the progress of the Non-Self-Governing Territories towards full self-government could be promoted.

88. *Dr. Corbin withdrew.*

89. *Mr. Gerts (Netherlands) took the Chair.*

Agenda item 26: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (*continued*) (A/60/23, A/60/71 and A/60/116)

Agenda item 34: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations (*continued*) (A/60/23, chap. VII and XII, and A/60/69)

Agenda item 35: Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories (*continued*) (A/60/23, chap. V and XII)

Agenda item 36: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations (*continued*) (A/60/23, chap. VI and VII, and A/60/64)

Agenda item 37: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories (*continued*) (A/60/67)

90. **Mr. Patasani** (India) noted that, at the midpoint of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, there were still 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories on the list. In assisting the peoples of the Territories towards one of the three options for full self-government defined in the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (resolution 1514 (XV)), it was necessary to combine urgency and activism with sensitivity and circumspection. The needs and aspirations and special circumstances of the people in each Territory must be taken into account. Timing and format were vital considerations. He agreed with the Chairman of the Special Committee on Decolonization that tailored programmes of work must be devised for each Territory. A critical tool was the dissemination of information on decolonization to the people in the Territories. Unbiased information, especially on the options for self-determination, must be disseminated and all parties concerned must continuously review those options.

91. The United Nations visiting missions were a most important means of collecting first-hand information on conditions in the Territories and of ascertaining the wishes of the peoples concerning their future status. The regional seminars were equally significant. They served as an effective forum for focused discussion, and afforded opportunities for the representatives of the peoples of the Territories to present their views and recommendations to the United Nations. An earlier initiative to combine visiting missions with regional seminars should be pursued.

92. The role of the administering Power was a decisive factor. In recent years the administering Powers had acted in a spirit of cooperation and flexibility and he called upon them to assist the Special Committee to devise tailored action plans for the decolonization of certain Territories, focusing particularly on the work relating to the Territories under their administration. He hoped that the cooperation and partnership displayed, for example by the United Kingdom, would translate into formal participation by administering Powers in the work of the Special Committee. An interactive dialogue on the reality in the Territories would benefit all concerned.

93. He agreed with the Chairman of the Special Committee that the focus of the Committee should currently be on implementation. He supported moves to concentrate efforts on a plan of implementation for the wider United Nations system to convert calls for action into positive activities in order to achieve complete decolonization by 2010.

94. **Mr. Toro Jiménez** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) stressed his delegation's opposition to attempts that were being made, on the pretext of reform of the Organization, to question the role of the Fourth Committee, which had played such an important part in eradicating colonialism since the founding of the United Nations. He reaffirmed his delegation's full support for all peoples fighting against any form of colonialism.

95. He noted that the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic shared a Spanish cultural heritage with much of Latin American and the Caribbean. That affinity made the situation in Western Sahara a source of special concern for his delegation. The United Nations must ensure the implementation of all relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and the holding of a referendum on self-determination, which would put an end to the illegal occupation of Western Sahara. He therefore welcomed the appointment of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General and called on all parties to cooperate with the Organization to resolve the conflict and allow the Saharan people to exercise their right to self-determination.

96. The principle of self-determination did not apply to the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), South Georgia Islands or South Sandwich Islands, Territories which belonged to Argentina; the population had been established there by the occupying Power.

97. His delegation supported the right of the people of Puerto Rico to self-determination and independence and called for the establishment of a mechanism to guarantee all Puerto Ricans the right to determine their political status and to put an end to the colonial relationship with the Federal Government of the occupying Power.

98. The decolonization process must be completed by the end of the Second Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. Little progress could be made, however, if there were attempts to redraft international law with a view to legalizing the rule of the imperial Powers, as had been attempted in the 2005 World Summit

Outcome document, in violation of the fundamental principles of international law enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and of due process. Member States should work to reform the Organization in a way that would strengthen the principles which had inspired its creation rather than seek in an underhanded manner to reassert the right of intervention of the former colonial and neo-colonial Powers.

99. **Mr. Dube** (Botswana), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community, stressed the great importance of decolonization and the principle of self-determination for peoples under foreign occupation. That had been the basis for the struggle for independence in the southern African subregion. In that context, he noted the commendable work of the Fourth Committee in addressing the plight of those still under colonial and foreign occupation and domination.

100. For more than four decades the issue of decolonization had been on the agenda of the Special Committee and Member States had been called upon to redouble their efforts to end colonialism during the Second International Decade. Little real progress had, however, been made since the independence of East Timor. All Member States therefore had a responsibility to assist the Non-Self-Governing Territories in their quest for independence.

101. The Southern African Development Community welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (A/60/71) and agreed that Member States, the administering Powers, the United Nations specialized agencies and programmes and the Special Committee must work together to implement the plan of action for the Second International Decade. In that context, he expressed support for the recommendations made at the Caribbean regional seminar on the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, held in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in May 2005, which had underscored the international community's commitment to the implementation of the plan of action.

102. With regard to Western Sahara, he said it was regrettable that the settlement plan and the Baker plan remained unimplemented; the Kingdom of Morocco must accept the Baker plan as the only viable option and agree to the holding of a free and fair referendum. He welcomed the recent appointment of a new Special Envoy and a new Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and was encouraged that the appointees were acceptable to both parties. The commendable initiatives noted in the report of the Secretary-General on the Question of Western Sahara (A/60/116), such as the exchange of family visits programme and the confidence-building measures, were demonstrations of political goodwill that could help to lead the way to a political solution.

103. He stressed that as long as peoples still lived under colonial occupation and domination, there could be no peace, development or real respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The eradication of colonialism must remain a priority for the United Nations and the international community; the Organization and the Special Committee, in particular, must ensure that the 16 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories achieved independence by the end of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

104. **Mr. Kapoma** (Zambia) said that his delegation was grateful to the Secretary-General for his report on the question of Western Sahara (A/60/116). Zambia strongly supported the process of decolonization in Western Sahara and to that end reaffirmed the inalienable right of all peoples, including those of Western Sahara to self-determination and independence, in accordance with the principles set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and in the landmark General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). Decolonization remained one of the unfinished assignments on the agenda of the United Nations. He called upon the international community to take all necessary steps to bring about the complete and speedy eradication of colonialism in all its forms in the remaining 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories.

105. He reaffirmed his Government's strong support for the efforts of the Secretary-General as expressed in the Baker plan, which had enjoyed the support of the Security Council in resolution 1541 (2004) and which constituted a mutually acceptable political solution to the conflict over Western Sahara. His Government urged the parties to the conflict to work with the United Nations with respect to the peace plan for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. The United Nations and the rest of the international community must not fail the Saharan people in their hour of need.

106. **Mr. Ileka** (Democratic Republic of the Congo), speaking on a point of order, said that his delegation associated itself with most of the statement made by the representative of Botswana on behalf of the Southern African Development Community. With regard to Western Sahara, his delegation's position remained unchanged: the United Nations must prevail on the parties involved to accept a fair and lasting settlement in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. He therefore called on all parties and States of the region to cooperate fully with the United Nations in ensuring progress towards a politically acceptable solution.

107. **Mr. Okio** (Congo) expressed regret that much remained to be done in order to put an end to colonialism and recalled that all States had a duty to assist in the decolonization process. The presentations by the numerous petitioners had made the urgency of such efforts apparent. No real progress towards economic and social development and independence for the Non-Self-Governing Territories would be possible without the full cooperation of the administering Powers and he called for a true partnership between the latter and the Special Committee. In that context, he cited New Zealand and the United Kingdom as examples of such a partnership, which should be imitated by the other administering Powers.

108. The Special Mission to Bermuda in March and May 2005 had provided an opportunity for dialogue with the population of that Territory and highlighted the need to increase awareness of the decolonization process in the Non-Self-Governing Territories and to improve the coordination of the decolonization efforts of the United Nations system. Such missions played an important role in evaluating the situation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories and strengthening assistance to their peoples and they could contribute to the development of effective policies. The successful Caribbean regional seminar held in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in May 2005 had confirmed the importance of frequent missions to the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

109. He welcomed efforts by the Department of Public Information to increase awareness about the decolonization process in the Non-Self-Governing Territories; those efforts should be strengthened and supported by the United Nations system as a whole. He commended the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for its activities in the Non-Self-Governing Territories and also commended States which offered fellowships to students from the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

110. The situation in Western Sahara was a source of grave concern; the parties to the conflict and the States in the subregion must work in a spirit of compromise to achieve a political solution that would take into account the principle of the right of peoples to self-determination, the interests of the populations concerned and the need for peace and cooperation in the subregion. He therefore welcomed signs of progress such as the release of prisoners, encouraged the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to promote dialogue between the parties to the conflict and welcomed the appointment of a new Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General.

111. **Mr. Ali** (Malaysia) said that more than 80 former colonies had gained their independence since the adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, in 1960; the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories were, however, a constant reminder that the decolonization process had not yet been concluded. He therefore welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (A/60/71) and stressed that it was the duty of the international community, the administering Powers and the United Nations system, in particular the Special Committee, to bring the process of decolonization to a successful conclusion.

112. He highlighted the importance of the Caribbean regional seminar, held in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in May 2005, which had provided a valuable opportunity to take stock of the progress that had been made, hear the views and recommendations of the representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and form strategies for the eradication of colonialism before the end of the Decade. The recommendations adopted at the seminar merited consideration and follow-up as tools to serve the needs of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. Many of those Territories had made considerable progress in their development and had gone a long way towards self-government; they simply had to find an appropriate format and calendar for the completion of decolonization.

113. He supported the idea of a public awareness campaign to increase understanding in the Non-Self-Governing Territories of the self-determination options available to them, especially with a view to developing programmes of work for specific Territories. The United Nations Information Centres, especially those in the Pacific and Caribbean regions, could play a significant role in promoting public awareness and mobilizing support for consultations on self-determination.

114. The administering Powers should cooperate with the Special Committee in a spirit of understanding, realism and flexibility. He called on the Special Committee to continue to encourage the resumption of negotiations between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom with a view to resolving the question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), taking into consideration the interests of the peoples of the Islands. With regard to Western Sahara, the parties should agree on a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution which would provide for the self-determination of the population in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

115. Noting that his delegation was currently Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement, he underscored the role the Movement had played in the decolonization progress. At their Thirteenth Summit Conference in Kuala Lumpur in February 2003, the Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement had reaffirmed the inalienable right of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to self-determination, regardless of their size, location, population or limited natural resources. The Non-Aligned Movement had also reaffirmed the rights of all people who had been or continued to be subject to colonial rule or occupation to receive from the colonizing countries full compensation for the economic, social and cultural consequences of that occupation.

116. His Government supported the principle of self-determination, which should be implemented in accordance with the wishes of the people, United Nations General Assembly resolutions and the Charter of the United Nations. It supported the work of the Special Committee, which should be provided with adequate financial and human resources to carry out the noble task of decolonization, and it would maintain its solidarity with the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

117. **Mr. Williams** (United Kingdom), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that his delegation reserved its right to reply at a later date to comments made by a number of delegations with regard to the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.